

We chose this historic location purposefully for today's gathering. I had visited Ebenezer Church and Dr. King's grave on my last visit and talked about having a meeting here. And Council Regional Coordinator Michael German made it happen.

A great movement emanated from this place. One that ended a social wrong, the notion that hue and pigmentation of skin had something to do with civil rights.

And now another social wrong is being confronted here in this city, in this country, and in this room today. An insidious injustice that has been accommodated for too long in public policy decisions that seem anesthetized to the magnitude of this social malady.

Can we in this room make a difference? Is the new partnership across this country – 20 federal agencies, 50 governors, and 175 mayors and county executives – capable of upsetting the current status quo of homelessness?

Let's consider a voice from a more recent time commenting on the impact 10-year planning can have on a social wrong, a moral injustice. Words spoken right here in this church some thirty-eight years ago:

"And when our organization [Southern Christian Leadership Conference] was formed ten years ago, racial segregation was still a structured part of the architecture of southern society. Negroes with the pangs of hunger and the anguish of thirst were denied access to the average lunch counter. The downtown restaurants were still off-limits for the black man. Negroes, Negro boys and girls in dire need of recreational activities were not allowed to inhale the fresh air of the big city parks. Negroes in desperate need of allowing their mental buckets to sink deep into the wells of knowledge were confronted with a firm "no" when they sought to use the city libraries. Ten years ago, legislative halls of the South were still ringing loud with such words as "interposition" and "nullification." All types of conniving methods were still being used to keep the Negro from becoming a registered voter. A decade ago, not a single Negro entered the legislative chambers of the South except as a porter or a chauffeur. Ten years ago, all too many Negroes were still harried by day and haunted by night by a corroding sense of fear and a nagging sense of nobody-ness. (Yeah)"

"But things are different now. In assault after assault, we caused the sagging walls of segregation to come tumbling down. During this era the entire edifice of segregation was profoundly shaken. This is an accomplishment whose consequences are deeply felt by every southern Negro in his daily life. (Oh yeah) It is no longer possible to count the number of public establishments that are open to Negroes. Ten years ago, Negroes seemed almost invisible to the larger society, and the facts of their harsh lives were unknown to the press and the daily conversation of white Americans. In this decade of change, the Negro stood up and confronted his oppressor. He faced the bullies and the guns, and the dogs and the tear gas. He put himself squarely before the vicious mobs and moved with strength and dignity toward them and decisively defeated them. (Yes) He came out of his struggle integrated only slightly in the external society, but powerfully integrated within. This was a victory that had to precede all other gains."

“In short, over the last ten years the Negro decided to straighten his back (Yes), realizing that a man cannot ride your back unless it is bent. (Yes, That’s right) We made our government write new laws to alter some of the cruelest injustices that affected us. We made an indifferent and unconcerned nation rise from lethargy and subpoenaed its conscience to appear before the judgment seat of morality on the whole question of civil rights.”

Ten years from now we want to echo the words of Dr. King that “things are different now.” The victory that we seek nationally in our next 10 years is the ending of chronic homelessness in our country.

That was our intent in sponsoring a series of city focus groups last year all across the country. We brought together city administrators and national innovators to ensure that the best ideas, innovations that are performance-based and results-oriented, were available to every city and county. Those focus groups were attended by 200 cities and were foundational in the current 175 10-year plans in development and in implementation.

These state colloquies have a similar intent: your participation in sharing innovative ideas in your state along with a faculty of innovators who have made a difference in state policy from inside and outside government. We’re thankful to Tim Marx and Lloyd Pendleton for making the long journey from their states.

It was a little too far for our friends in Hawaii to join us but just this week Governor Lingle there announced several creative initiatives in her State of the State Address, using TANF resources and creating housing. Our e-newsletter contains the highlights of her announcements and can be accessed on our website at www.ich.gov.

In ensuring that we are all aware of the innovations that are making a difference throughout the nation and across the world, our intention is this: to close the gap between knowledge and practice.

How many of you are music fans? If you hear that people in an adjoining state were all listening to music off of 8-tracks, you’d probably let them know that the means and methodologies of listening are now slightly more sophisticated. Instead of listening to a tape in order of sequence you can now shuffle 5000 songs on your i-pod, smaller than an 8-track tape.

You would have the knowledge to influence that practice. And in sharing the technology you could enhance their enjoyment of all their favorite tunes, all available in a moment.

Now retailers of 8-tracks may not be happy with you for disturbing their market, but the consumer of music, the customer, would be grateful for opening their world to what they’ve always wanted and thought was only a dream. That’s what innovators are – disturbers of the stationary.

On the issue that brings us together today there are, in fact, new technologies, new strategies, new ways of doing things that get the result we all want – reducing and ending chronic homelessness. That would not only make us happy and fulfilled, but the consumer would be

most happy to have their dream realized after years of management of their situation without solutions.

We're here to exchange those technologies. And they don't necessarily come out of the homelessness issue itself. In fact most often they come from elsewhere. From the housing world, the faith communities, rev-max strategies, the United Way, and of all places, managed care and retired lawyers.

Technology exchange. The notion that something that's done one place can be done in another. It's called other things – replication in polite society – larceny in others.

The point, of course, is to increase our knowledge of what's working elsewhere so that our practice can catch up to the most innovative initiatives: supportive housing; Housing First; No Wrong Door; Assertive Community Treatment Teams; data collection and analysis; discharge planning protocols; psychotropic drugs; cost benefit analysis. All are now borrowed technologies, borrowed from the corporate and service sectors and now a part of our own abolitionist movement. They're part of that "organizational savvy" that transforms the status quo and is in the service of abolishing social wrong.

Our practice needs to catch up to our current knowledge. That's the first principle of these colloquies. And as we talk around this table together the seeds of innovation will be available to take root and make us better at what we do.

The second and final principle is that the wrong diagnosis leads to the wrong prescription, which leads to no cure.

We talked earlier today about one icon of our American experience, Dr. King. Another, of course, is George Washington, first parent of our country. When he left the Presidency and retired to Mount Vernon he was a hardy man who worked his plantation with his mind and his body.

One day he didn't feel well. And then a series of days came along during which he felt so ill that he remained in bed. Very unusual for this robust and fit person.

He had summoned one of his best friends, Dr. Benjamin Rush from Philadelphia, to come and diagnose the problem. Dr. Rush came as quickly as the roads back then allowed and, in concert with other physicians, decided what the problem was. Bad humors in the blood. Prescription – bleeding. Means – leeches.

The treatment was rendered and the good doctor assured his legendary patient that he'd be up and fit within a few weeks.

A few weeks went by. Washington felt worse. He again summoned Dr. Rush who came quickly. Dr. Rush understood immediately what was happening. The bad humors in the blood had not been sufficiently treated and Washington's digestive system needed to be cleared and cleansed. The new prescription called for more bleeding and medicine.

Rush's intentions were good, and he assured his patient, the family, and the other doctors that his treatment would get the job done. So the prescription was administered.

The leeches were re-applied and potent laxatives ingested. Five pints of blood were taken from Washington and his digestive system completely cleared out.

Diagnosis – bad humors.

Prescription – leeches and laxatives.

Treatment – blood loss and dehydration.

All well intentioned.

Washington was dead within weeks.

The best of intentions led to the unintended consequence of opposite results. Health intended; death resulted.

We now know that Washington had a case of epiglottitis. Now, if you have this illness, a simple antibiotic is administered and health is restored. This diagnosis and prescription get the job done.

If we offered only past treatment for this disease, leeches and laxatives, we'd be criminally negligent.

A third American icon, none other than Albert Einstein, reminds us that it's insane to do the same thing over and over again, expecting different results. That is crazy.

But we know now that's more than just crazy. For the poorest, it's criminal. Misusing resources and shuffling homeless people are economically wasteful and morally wrong.

Even if we're well intentioned. Even from a good heart. When our knowledge of best practices increases, we have the possibility to move beyond consequences of dependency, cycling, and human tragedy. If we don't abandon diagnoses and prescriptions that are outmoded and harmful, we sustain a status quo that hasn't worked.

We have new technologies, strategies, approaches, innovative ideas.

We have new research and data to diagnose better.

We have new technologies to prescribe better.

We have new data to know the consumer and customer better.

Armed with all of these we should effect better cures. That's why Governors and Mayors are joining us in this effort. They want better cures. Results-oriented solutions. They're tired –

we're all tired of the alternative of 20 years of well-intentioned, ad hoc, siloed crisis interventions that have left homeless people on our streets and long term in our shelters.

We want the patient not only to live.

But to have a better quality of life.

So that every member of our community, every citizen of our state, is known by a single name – neighbor - and treated as one.

Finally, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., reminds us that the long arc of history bends toward justice. In America's past, the abolitionists, the suffragists, and civil rights activists took a firm grip on that arc, despite charges of naïveté and folly, and bent that long arc into justice for the slave, for the disenfranchised, and for the one faced with discrimination.

That's the work of this state colloquy and your work in your states. That's why I'm proud to be here with you. Ensuring you that you have a partner in Washington in your abolitionist efforts to bend that arc into the lives of our homeless neighbors.

Thank you for joining this national movement. Thank you for being in this historic place to recommit together to our ten year commitment to "make things different."